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News Letter



Letter

OF THE SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME MUSEUM

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The Museum's Library

Receives Modern Research Tools

"At last we are in the 20th century. Our microfilm reader is installed and functioning, and I have been able to delve into the rich vein of history that we have in the National Microfilm Association's gift of microfilm. . . ."

So wrote Librarian Albert Harmon to Mr. Vernon D. Tate in thanks for his Association's part in the gift of \$6,000 worth of equipment and microfilm that was awarded to the Maritime Museum in late April at the 19th Annual National Microfilm Association Convention. Member organizations of the N.M.A. have made it their practice in recent years to award microfilm equipment to a chosen library in the locality of their annual convention. Mr. Henry Rusk, former conservator of the De Young Museum, and a good friend of this Museum's, brought our library to the association's attention as one in this area that would benefit greatly from a donation of microfilm equipment. The gift, formally made to the Museum on April 28, includes a Recorder-Printer for microfilm presented by the 3-M Company, A Recordak viewer, given by Eastman Kodak Company, a number of Microfiche films on maritime subjects for use in the Recordak given by the National Geographic Society, and microfilms of the New York *Shipping and Commercial List* for 1864 to 1893 donated by the Association itself.

Both of the viewers offer marvelous possibilities for extending the scope of our library. The 3-M Viewer-Printer is a truly amazing machine: you move the film, which is seen enlarged on a glass viewer, at whatever speed suits your purpose; when you find material that you want reproduced, you press a button, the machine seems to give a big inward sigh, and in less than a minute, out comes a positive print of your chosen subject.

The Recordak, in which a 4" by 6" film carrying the image of as many as 100 pages of a magazine, pamphlet or book, is inserted and viewed enlarged on a ground glass, has an indexing system for quick notation of material to be referred to again.

Mr. Harmon hopes to acquire microfilms of volumes missing in our American Lloyds' *Register of Shipping*. This is the sort of material that it is particularly appropriate for the Museum to acquire on microfilm, for the film would cost less than the volumes themselves, were they available,

and the saving of space, more and more a consideration as our library expands, would be a great advantage.

Members who use the library for research may request inter-library loans of microfilm, and Mr. Harmon looks forward to the day when we can arrange exchanges of film with East Coast museums, whose whaling logs, for instance, would be useful to researchers here. Thus the study of history is served through these representatives of technical advance. The Maritime Museum is extremely fortunate to be the recipient of such a gift.



The Shop on the Ship:

Under the management of Mr. Al Haas, formerly of The Works antique shop, the shop on *Balclutha* has been expanded in size and stock. A number of items of interest to collectors of maritime antiques are now offered for sale, and the classic maritime titles are kept in stock. Contemporary fancy work is available at the shop; ships in bottles, lanterns, wheels, blocks and paintings are part of the stores customarily found there. Mr. Haas keeps the shop open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and members receive a discount on their purchases.

The *Glory*

Michael J. Mjelde, *Glory of the Seas*. Wesleyan University Press, 1970. 303pp. \$9.95. Available at Museum and *Balclutha* sales counters.

With the publication of *Glory of the Seas* by Michael Jay Mjelde, the Marine Historical Association and the Wesleyan University Press inaugurate their American Maritime Library.

Those of us who watched the growth of Mr. Mjelde's manuscript over the past twelve years could not have hoped for finer treatment of the text at the hands of the publisher. The book looks and feels like one that belongs on that special shelf reserved for books of permanent value that will be referred to again and again as authorities.

Mr. Mjelde's text lives up to all that the physical book promises. Here is the story of Donald McKay's last clipper ship—from her first design in the mind of the master builder to her end in 1923 when her hull was burned on a beach near Seattle; her voyages, her masters, her owners, all told by one devoted admirer.

Patiently researched, superbly documented, *Glory of the Seas* is a work that belongs in the library of every student of sailing ships.

—Albert Harmon, Librarian

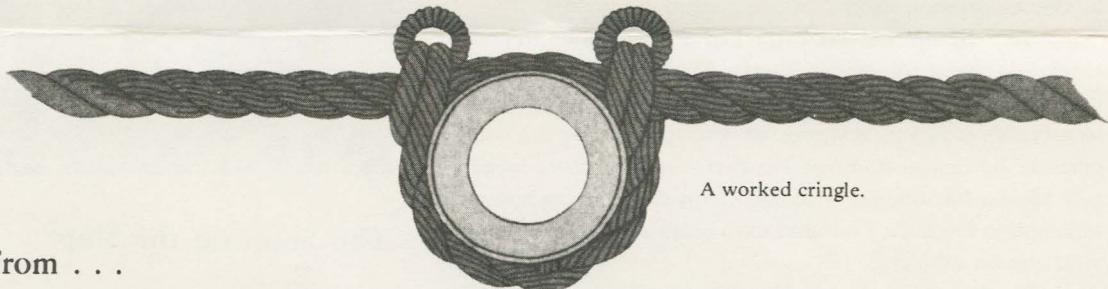
Michael Jay Mjelde, whose *Glory of the Seas* is noted above, has kindly responded to our request for information on one of *Glory*'s nameboards, now on display in the 'tween-decks museum on *Balclutha*. He writes: "I am certainly glad to help provide a bit of background material respecting the nameboard. I do not know whether Al

[Harmon] told you that when he and I went to Mr. Oscar Graham's house in Tacoma, it was nailed up on the garage above the door. When I first saw it, it was lying next to the house.

"The material is boat cedar. I was told by the ship-carver at Mystic Seaport that it is a difficult wood to work with, especially because it is so 'rubbery.' Bear in mind that it was originally hand-carved with chisels, not with a router mounted on a power drill. The V-type letters took considerable time to carve.

"You have *Glory*'s port bow nameboard. It was originally taken off the ship in 1922 at Tacoma when she was being stripped of salvageable machinery by the refrigeration firm of Maingault & Graham. She originally (as a new ship) had four nameboards, two on the bow and one on each quarter; however, by the time she reached the half-century mark [in 1909], the quarter boards had disappeared. When your board was removed, her starboard bow board was likewise stripped off the ship—but was split in half in the process. When 'Okey' Graham (a principal in the book) was in the service during World War II, one of his relatives chopped up the split board for fire kindling.

"As to whether it was originally on the ship when she was built, there is no definite way that this can now be established. If it was, it was carved by Herbert Gleason, who also carved the Greek goddess figurehead for *Glory*. As you probably know, a wooden ship is constantly being repaired in some minor manner; however, I have been told that boat cedar is highly resistant to dry rot, and this is one problem that constantly had to be dealt with, especially with a ship which sailed as long as *Glory of the Seas* did as an active trader. Besides this, the wear and tear of the elements—heaving seas, blustery winds and heat and cold—made their mark on the old ship."



A worked cringle.

A Few Words From . . .

Jack Dickerhoff, master rigger, who talked with Karl Kortum about turning in cringles* on August 18, 1969:

"I work a cringle in with a big sailmaker's marlin-spike—I don't use a standing fid.

"The common method is to place the cringle over the standing fid and beat it down to the thimble size with a leather mallet. That is the American method. After they've got it almost there, they lay the sail on the sail-loft floor,

put the thimble in half way, and then whop it in with the base of the standing fid.

"Not me. I work it in—I make it like you do a splice. In other words, it's a 'worked cringle.' It will outlast the sail that way. It is the European style of sail-making."

*cringle: the strand of a rope worked into a circular eye on the leeches or clews of sails. Usually it is made around a clew iron or thimble.



Neil Malloch examines the yardarm.

An Important Find at the Diggings

Early in May, at 180° east of Montgomery Street, 60° north of Clay Street, and 20 feet below the level of the street, at the site of the excavation for the Transamerica Building, Museum member Neil Malloch found, among various relics and bottles, a most unusual yardarm.

After having Director Karl Kortum identify the find, and obtaining a release from the Transamerica official in charge of relics, Mr. Malloch trucked the wooden yardarm to the Museum.

The total length of the find, which is in two parts, is 35 feet. What makes it of unusual interest is its boom iron, which is of the type used for a *stun'sa'l* boom. The studding sails, or *stun'sa'l*s, are light sails set from booms which were portable extensions of the yardarms. *Stun'sa'l*s were in common use on square-rigged ships in Gold Rush days; by the 1890s, however, they were a rarity.

The facts that the yardarm was found about ten feet below the old water level, and that its boom iron dates it possibly to Gold Rush days are enough to guarantee its interest to the Museum. But the further information noted by Mr. Malloch in his report to the Museum elevates the relic to even greater interest: it was found just west of the site of the ship *Niantic*, which was hauled up at high tide to the mud and eventually became a storehouse after her crew abandoned her for the gold fields in 1849.

The Ship-Modelers' Case

The case on the second floor of the Museum that is reserved for the work of local builders of ship models contains an interesting new display that demonstrates the effect on detail of building the same hull to differing scales. The two plank-on-frame models now on view are both of the American man-of-war *Lexington*. The larger of the two, built by Marshall Hughes, is twice the size of the smaller, which was built by Charles Piazza. The two models are in different stages of completion, and so also afford an insight into the process of building a model.

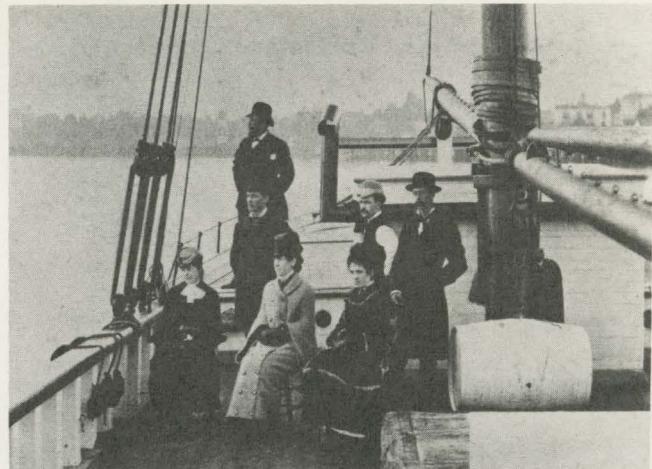
These built-up models are fine examples of the ship-modeler's craft. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Piazza were particularly ambitious in tackling the problems of building models of a large vessel, a complicated and demanding effort.

The *Lexington* was one of a small fleet of fourteen merchant vessels that were hastily converted into warships in 1775. Her battery of sixteen 4-pounders saw her through many Revolutionary War battles. Her dimensions: length on the gun deck, 90 ft. 0 in.; length on keel, 76 ft. 5 in.; beam, 22 ft. 8 in., depth, 9 ft. 0 in.

Stevensoniana

For the past several years, the Museum has been gathering photographs, information and artifacts relating to the Scots-born author Robert Louis Stevenson, who lived briefly in San Francisco and in Monterey before his journey from this port for the South Seas in the schooner yacht *Casco*.

It was in June 1888 that the author of *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island* (among the best-known of his many works) set sail from here on what was to be a voyage for health and pleasure. The *Casco* took the Stevenson party (the author, his wife and his stepson) to Honolulu. There they paid off the *Casco*, stayed in Honolulu for a year, and in June 1889 left for the Gilberts and Samoa on the trading schooner *Equator*. *continued on page 4*



The Stevenson party aboard *Casco*.

Partly through wayward good fortune, and partly through diligent sleuthing, the nameboards of both of these vessels have come into the Museum's possession. It is now our pleasure, until such a time as the materials for our projected Stevenson display are all gathered, to loan them to a new museum of Stevensoniana, the Silverado Museum in St. Helena. The nameboards will beautifully supplement the collection of Stevenson rare first editions, original

manuscripts and autographs which has been gathered over twenty-five years by Mr. Norman Strouse, and is now installed in what has been described as a "jewel-box" of a museum. There they supply one of the few tangible evidences of Stevenson's sea voyages, and will remind the yearly 10,000 visitors to that museum what effective touchstones for recollection and understanding artifacts such as these can be.

A Successful Party Aboard *Balclutha*



The director and his wife chat with the president of the Propeller Club at a gala Wine Taste.

A "Wine Taste," sponsored by the Women's Propeller Club, Port of San Francisco, for the Museum's benefit was a most successful event, both in pleasure and proceeds. Held on *Balclutha* on the evening of May 1, the Wine Taste attracted about 350 members and guests. Wines of California, donated by members of the Wine Growers of California Association, were sampled, and cheeses supplied by the Propeller Club were served as an accompaniment. The wines, at three separate stations, were from Beaulieu Vineyard of Rutherford, Lords & Elwood Winery of Fremont, and Mondavi Winery of Oakville. American President Lines supplied a door prize of a choice of either luncheon or dinner for two aboard one of their passenger ships; a sightseeing tour for two on a helicopter and a floral arrange-

ment were also attractive prizes. Mrs. Dennis S. Holler of Walnut Creek supervised the arrangements for the party, and was assisted by Mrs. John Roberts of Morega.

The Propeller Club of this port is associated with the national group, which is composed of women whose own work or whose husbands' work is connected with the maritime industry. The party aboard *Balclutha* is one of several services this group has rendered the Maritime Museum. They have also staffed our Museum Gift Shop, and proved their concern with the Museum's efforts in a number of ways. This support is much appreciated, not only for the financial gain, which in the case of the Wine Taste was \$500, but for the active participation in Museum activities that such projects entail.

The San Francisco Maritime Museum
ALBERT W. GATOV, President
KARL KORTUM, Director

News Letter is sent to members of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, a private, nonprofit historical society. Interested non-members are cordially invited to join the Museum to help support its program of the preservation and display of Pacific Coast maritime history.—Anita V. Mozley, Editor